

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 775

By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to honor Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks upon his receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee has been blessed to be the home of many outstanding Americans and it takes great pride in the outstanding accomplishments and remarkable feats of her beloved sons and daughters; and

WHEREAS, such a notable Tennessean is Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks of Memphis, who was recently awarded the prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, established by President Harry S. Truman in 1945, the Presidential Medal of Freedom is our nation's highest civil honor and is given to those individuals deemed to have made remarkable contributions to the United States of America as a tribute to a lifetime of service throughout a distinguished career; and

WHEREAS, the first Memphian to be so honored, Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks is an icon of the civil rights movement, a dedicated and visionary leader whose years of tireless effort to enact social change are truly inspirational and legendary; and

WHEREAS, born in Memphis, Tennessee, on January 31, 1925, Benjamin Hooks received his undergraduate degree from LeMoyne College in Memphis, and he earned his J.D. degree from DePaul University Law School in 1948; and

WHEREAS, returning to Tennessee, Dr. Hooks worked as a lawyer in Memphis before being ordained as a Baptist minister in 1956; and

WHEREAS, after establishing his own law firm, Dr. Hooks fought to break down segregation, and in 1965, he became the first African-American criminal court judge in Tennessee since Reconstruction; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Dr. Benjamin Hooks became the first African-American member of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC); during his tenure, the FCC worked to diminish employment discrimination and to increase minority ownership of television and radio stations; and

WHEREAS, in 1977, Dr. Hooks was named Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a post he held until 1993; he is recognized for elevating the NAACP's position on such issues as the environment, national health, and the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, for his outstanding achievements, Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks was awarded the Spingarn Medal in 1986, the NAACP's highest honor; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hooks also served for ten years as the Chairman of the Leadership Council on Civil Rights and is currently a Distinguished Professor of Political Science and History at the University of Memphis, where he provides active guidance to the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change, a public policy research center working to advance the understanding of the legacy of the American civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin Hooks has served as Chairman of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, as President of the National Civil Rights Museum, and as special advisor to the NAACP on voting rights issues; and

WHEREAS, a truly spiritual man, Dr. Hooks is the longtime pastor of Greater Middle Baptist Church in Memphis, where he shares his deep and abiding faith with the membership of his loyal congregation; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin Hooks enjoys the love and companionship of his beloved wife, Frances Dancy Hooks; their devoted daughter, Patricia; and two treasured grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, it is especially appropriate for this body to honor such a truly inspiring Tennessean and exemplary American; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that that we honor and commend Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks upon his receipt of the

Presidential Medal of Freedom and recognize him as a champion of equality, opportunity, and justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.